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ABSTRACT

The U.S. public high school should return to a core curriculum which is defined as a broad consensus on the basic information and skills to which most young students should have been exposed by the time they graduate from high school. The duty of educators is to teach the skills and general information that enable educated persons to continue learning: In a high technology society these skills would include: knowledge of science; reading and language skill; interpreting maps, charts, graphs and diagrams; locating information, and analytic or evaluative skills. These abilities and skills are acquired over the years through core courses carefully planned to ensure sequence, necessary repetition, and steady expansion of knowledge. History and literature must be included as they are the exemplars for common values and standards of behavior. The social studies curriculum should emphasize history (national and world), geography, and U.S. government. The return to a core curriculum would eliminate the proliferation of short courses which may be more concerned with influencing students' attitudes and behavior than with conveying knowledge and skills. Educators teaching core courses will be able to incorporate the problem-oriented short courses into their subjects while giving the students a broader understanding of the issues. (SM)

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A Case for Real Core Curriculum In Secondary Social Studies

Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the
Social Science Education Consortium

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Raymond English

Raymond
English

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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"I couldn't afford to learn it," said the Mock Turtle with a
sigh. "I only took the regular course."

"What was that?" asked Alice.

"Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with," the Mock
Turtle replied; "and then the different branches of Arithmetic --
Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision."

"I never heard of 'Uglification,'" Alice ventured to say.

"What is it?"

The Gryphon lifted up both its paws in surprise. "Never heard
of uglifying!" it exclaimed. "You know what to beautify is, I
suppose?"

"Yes," said Alice doubtfully: "it means-to-make-anything-
prettier."

"Well, then," the Gryphon went on, "if you don't know what to
uglify is, you are a simpleton."

Alice did not feel encouraged to ask any more questions about
it: so she turned to the Mock Turtle, and said "What else had you
to learn?"

"Well, there was Mystery," the Mock Turtle replied, counting
off the subjects on his flappers, "--Mystery, ancient and modern,
with Seaography: then Drawling--the Drawling-master was an old
conger-eel, that used to come once a week: he taught us Drawling,
Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.

"What was that like?" said Alice.

"Well, I ca'n't show it you, myself," the Mock Turtle said:

"I'm too stiff. And the Gryphon never learnt it."

"Hadn't time," said the Gryphon: "I went to the Classical
master, though. He was an old crab, he was."

"I never went to him," the Mock Turtle said with a sigh. "He
taught Laughing and Grief, they used to say."

"So he did, so he did," said the Gryphon, sighing in his turn;
and both creatures hid their faces in their paws.

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By "core curriculum" I mean a broad consensus on the basic information and skills to which most young Americans should have been exposed by the time they graduate from high school. This should be the core of formal education, around which schools may offer a number of electives. Why is it necessary to argue this point? It seems necessary because of three recent factors.

First, in an effort to keep up with the "information explosion" many educators have -- over the past two or three decades -- introduced many short courses designed to cater to a multiplicity of perceived needs or express demands.

Second, the professional understanding of the term "core course" has changed. In the past each core course had a solid and sequential syllabus, which included the essential information that a generally well-informed person might be expected to possess on that subject. For example, a course in American History did not permit the teacher to skip such details as the French and Indian War, Shays' Rebellion, the name and character of the first president, Jefferson's Embargo, the Monroe Doctrine, Jackson's attack on the Bank and the economic crisis that followed, the Mexican War, "Bleeding Kansas," etc., etc. This type of core course recently became unfashionable, and even though lip-service was paid to "core subjects," the notion that young people should be exposed to a survey of an important area of knowledge was rejected in favor of "depth" studies of limited problems and cases.

This second factor is connected with the third. The third

factor is that many educators and policy-makers have tended to neglect content, or substance, in order to focus on "behavior modification," or changing students' values and motives. The "information explosion" is irrelevant for those who adopt this point of view; in fact, the first and third factors are incompatible.

Formerly, the issue of core curriculum tended to arise only in post-secondary education, since people assumed elementary and secondary education to be necessarily directed to an agreed central body of skills and information and common culture, whereas post-secondary education should be progressively specialized. Indeed, higher education can be specialized if pre-college instruction is effective. Obviously, if high school graduates have not acquired the core of education, colleges and universities will have to supply it. In the 1960s and '70s, many schools failed to supply that core, and many pedagogic experts condoned their failure.

So much by way of definition. My intention is to open up a discussion of what our social studies core should consist of. Before that, however, let us consider the arguments for more and more elective, short courses.

(1) The information explosion: Schools must expose students to many new types of knowledge and skills, for example: participatory democracy; environmental problems; computers; nuclear weapons; cultural pluralism; cultural and ethical relativism; the nature of racial and sexual prejudice; sexual activity; aging, death, and dying; drugs,

alcohol, tobacco addiction; conflict resolution; and ethnic studies.

(2) Nearly all the short courses mentioned in (1) are also advocated for another reason: -- In order to prepare students for a changing, revolutionary world we need to change their attitudes from the rigid values and culture patterns of the past, and this is most effectively done in narrow concentrated courses on topics such as "sex education," "values clarification," "the Holocaust," "black studies," "nuclear war education," "the Family," and, vaguely, "global education" or "peace education."

(3) Another aspect of the information explosion: since knowledge is expanding so fast, and since the world is changing so rapidly, old notions of a necessary central body of knowledge have become irrelevant. No one can know what knowledge is necessary. Even the "lessons of history" no longer apply; traditional history and classics of literature are as obsolete as traditional values.

(4) Given so much new information and so many and frequent changes in contemporary life, high school teachers cannot be expected to keep abreast unless they are given specific, detailed, narrowly focused instructional materials such as are provided for special short courses.

(5) Education in the United States, like politics, has to cater to special interest and single-issue pressures. The obvious way to satisfy such group-pressure is to introduce a special course. Many of the examples given already illustrate such pressure-inspired courses. One might add "Free Enterprise System," "Native Americans," and others. I am told that the Old Dominion of Virginia has a course in bee-keeping to please the honey-producers.

(6) We should mention some older special elective courses, such as business courses, typing, home economics, auto-driving, drama, speech, "band," orchestra, choir, debate. To these we may add "computers." These are quite different from the attitude-changing short courses of recent decades.

(7) The most serious, if not the most compelling, reason for the proliferation of varied elective courses and for abandoning the old academic core is benevolent and ideological. The comprehensive public high school is regarded by many as the great democratizing, equalizing force in American society. Everyone is presumed to need and benefit from continued formal education until the age of 17 or 18, and everyone is supposed to get equal treatment and equal privileges. (This is delusion, as anyone can see by visiting an inner city high school and a middle class suburban high school.) However, the compelling fact about comprehensive high schools is that at least 25 percent of

their students are unable to cope with challenging academic courses. Indeed, to force them to endure such education is cruel. Consequently the older secondary curriculum has been abandoned. The object of many short courses is to please students and get their attention. This is also called "making education relevant." It is now the above-average student who suffers the cruelty of boredom and frustration. However, the purpose of equalization is fulfilled, at least in theory, by the abandonment of core requirements, achievement tests, and sustained academic challenge, coupled with the substitution of electives in relatively unintellectual subjects.

These seven reasons appear to constitute the case for abandoning a basic, academic core curriculum. To what extent are they valid?

Let me begin by pointing out that the older special courses are different in content and in objective from recent innovations. The older courses are concerned with skills, not with attitudes, values, or influencing emotions and judgment. This is a crucial distinction. Specialized, limited skills are effectively taught in concentrated courses, especially if they become part of the habitual activity of the student as is usually the case with driving, cooking, sewing, typing, and vocational courses such as auto-repair and television repair. It is often the case with basic computer instruction.

What about the argument that the information explosion renders a variety of short courses essential? Or that since no one can foresee the kaleidoscope pattern of the future, solid core courses are out-dated? One might argue on exactly opposite lines. Since we do not know precisely what knowledge or special skills will be necessary ten years hence, our only possible duty is to teach the skills and general information that enable educated persons to continue learning. In a high tech society, one must know mathematics, and something about physics and chemistry. Certainly one must read with understanding, interpret maps, charts, graphs and diagrams, know how to find information, be able to express oneself clearly both orally and in writing, and know how to judge phony arguments or illogical conclusions. These abilities are provided by exposure over the years to core courses carefully planned to ensure sequence, necessary repetition, and steady expansion of knowledge.

I suggest, too, that the argument that history, classics of literature, and traditional values are irrelevant is fallacious. Are personal integrity, self-discipline, respect for others, kindness, courage, generosity, fairness, honest work, temperance, cooperation, competitiveness going to be out-moded in our society? If that is the case, our society will die an early death, and a messy, miserable, and unlamented one. Since history and literature are the exemplars for common values and standards of behavior it seems unnecessary to defend their place in core curriculum. In any case, these subjects are humanizing, and, if taught well, most interesting, thought-provoking, and stimulating for the imagination. Education is not merely utilitarian. It should cater to the

pleasure and leisure as well as the duties and chores of each person's existence.

One of the most persuasive arguments against trying to keep up in education with the information explosion is to be found in Jeremy Rifkin's 1980 book, Entropy: A New World View. Rifkin is a leader of the gloomy environmentalist school that has exercised considerable influence in educational circles.

Rifkin describes the deterioration of educational results between 1965 and 1980 and proceeds to diagnose the cause as excessive information flow.

All of these things combined have greatly increased the energy flow-through and resulted in problems ranging from increased learning disabilities to acts of vandalism and violence. Said one teacher on the CBS report:

We have this vast proliferation of distractors, diversions. . . . We just keep pouring things into the school and on top of the kids' heads. And then suddenly someone realizes, "Hey, this kid can't read."

The "techniquing" of education has become so oppressive, remarked one parent in the same school system, that it's a wonder the children learn at all. The parent told of visiting the school's "reading center" and becoming depressed at how many instructions on "exactly" how to read were plastered all over the room's walls. With that kind of overload, the parent remarked, "I just don't see how they

would ever really get into the mood of reading. If I were a child it would turn me off just totally."

The classrooms and corridors of America's giant school centers are overflowing with dissipated energy, much of it generated by the educational system. It's no wonder that children have a difficult time maintaining an attention span and that they exhibit a level of anxiety that often leads to outright violence. School vandalism now costs over \$600 million a year. Part of the blame, of course, rests with factors outside the school, many of which (but not all) are related to information overload. The TV is perhaps the number-one culprit. Five or more hours a day of nonstop one-way information flow is bound to seriously weaken the child's ability to concentrate and absorb information. Says one educator:

I think we've developed a generation that thinks of communication in terms of receiving messages, being talked to, rather than sending messages. And also, because of this great stimulation, when the child goes into the classroom they look at the teacher and, I think, make unhappy comparisons. . . . It's not the excitement of a fleeting picture. Learning is hard work, and it cannot come with images on the screen.

It's insane, when you stop just long enough to think about it, that as we become less and less able to deal with information overload, new techniques are devised by the media, the educational industry, and the information sciences to speed up, compress, and shove even more bits of

information down us in the hopes that enough will stay down long enough to be of some marginal economic or social value. Never once do they consider that the source of the increasing disorder rests with the very transformers that are directing the massive energy flow and increasing the entropy of the environment in the process. It reminds one of the story of the prison guards who were advised that increased punishment of the prisoners only increased their antisocial behavior and the incidences of violence. After careful consideration, the guards concluded that the answer to the problem was to "punish the increased violence."

(Jeremy Rifkin with Ted Howard. Entropy: A New World View. New York: Bantam, 1981. First published 1980. pp. 172-174.)

What of the argument that teachers are incapable of keeping up with changing information unless they are given pre-digested small instructional packages? In other words, a teacher who is teaching a core course in United States or World History is considered incapable of discussing in their historical context such topics as racial prejudice, or the attempted extermination of European Jews, or the nature of nuclear deterrence in super-power relations. And a teacher of literature or history is assumed to be incapable of discussing conflicts of values and problems of ethical decisions in the context of actual historical and literary situations, and therefore needing an artificially contrived set of guidelines to discuss the human predicament.

Are our teachers really so helpless? I do not believe that they are unable to discuss intelligently and knowledgeably matters of common experience and the ideas that have been the heart of liberal education since the times of Socrates and Plato, and Cicero and Tacitus. However, if teachers are expected to convey lessons in ethics, or "values," contrary to their own experience and the opinions of their society, they will need very special help. I suspect that that is the correct explanation for the special courses and so-called categorical programs that proliferated in recent decades.

The program for subverting traditional standards is strengthened by the influence of special interest groups, each of which is willing to impose its own distorting mirror on the schools' interpretation of our society and its history and institutions. This problem is by no means a purely recent phenomenon. You will find anxiety about factious subversion in the Roman Republic, in city states in medieval Italy, Hobbes's Leviathan, and Rousseau's Social Contract, not to mention the Federalist Papers.

In the United States today, however, single-issue pressure has been brought to a high degree of efficiency, with the result that Rousseau's fear that the General Will will be overwhelmed by multiple Particular Wills is all too often vindicated. In education the evidence is to be found in the warped and untrustworthy content of many textbooks as well as in the multiplication of short courses and "categorical programs" encouraged (formerly) by the Department of Education.

I suggest that educators should recognize this usurpation of authority and set their own priorities, based on educational criteria.

There remain the two most intractable arguments against the solid, basic academic core: the theory that public education should be used to reform our society by reshaping the minds of the rising generation, and its associated ideological program of democratization and equalization by means of comprehensive high schools.

The Progressive educationists are not solely responsible for these assumptions. Politicians, from Congress down to local Boards of Education, have attempted to unload on the public schools the task of utopianizing American society. (See, for example, John C. Sawhill's article, "Why Our Public Schools Don't Work" in Reader's Digest, November 1979.) It is unfortunate that educators did not tell the politicians at the outset that they were asking impossibilities. On the contrary, many educators seemed, like the Seabees, to welcome impossibilities.

In preparing this paper I consulted the November-December, 1986, issue of Social Education, which was devoted to "Scope and Sequence." I was particularly interested in the four essays by Michael Hartoonian and Margaret A. Laughlin, by Shirley Engle and Anna Ochoa, by William B. Stanley and Jack Nelson, and Willard M. Kniep. The Engle-Ochoa recipe seems to call for short courses,

since it stipulates four requirements:

1. The curriculum should be confrontational rather than strictly expository.
2. The curriculum should be highly selective.
3. Each unit of instruction should be organized around an important problem in society that is to be studied to the greatest depth possible . . . as well as with as much independence from the other problems selected for study as is reasonable.
4. The curriculum should utilize relatively large quantities of data from a variety of sources.

The Stanley-Nelson prescription is tantalizingly vague, but I guess that it would be incompatible with an academic survey of world history and world geography, or a chronological account of American history.

The quality shared by all four proposals is an overriding concern with influencing students' attitudes and behavior. Conveying knowledge and skills seems to be at best a minor objective of social studies education. Stanley and Nelson candidly state that their aim is the transformation of society via the schools. The question whether the teaching profession really knows what is best for the rest of us does not seem to trouble the authors; nor do they show any anxiety over the possibility that some school boards and teachers may want to transform society in an opposite direction.

We seem to face a clash of ethical and ideological convictions that may be unresolvable, at least in the short run. It is worth pointing out, however, that schools, unless they are boarding schools, are remarkably inefficient instruments for "brainwashing," that is, subverting prevailing behavior patterns that are reinforced by family, peer-group, and community, not to mention the propaganda of commercial television. On the other hand, schools in the past have proved quite efficient at instilling knowledge, discipline, and basic skills in their pupils. My own inclination is to recommend teachers and administrators to concentrate on the job they can do quite well.

But what about the comprehensive high school and its need to offer suitable courses to the lowest I.Q. quartile of the rising generation? One question is: does the community and does the authority controlling educational policy consider the imposition of equality (and necessarily mediocrity) more important than efficiency in public education? My own strong preference is for efficiency, not merely for the sake of students in the upper levels of I.Q. but for the sake of society as a whole. The less intelligent members of society will suffer more from an inefficient society than they do from a presumed sense of intellectual inferiority. In any case, imposed equality is a delusion, since the brighter will forge ahead sooner or later no matter how much the school attempts to discourage them. If these arguments are correct, why not follow the lessons of long experience and offer different tracks with different core courses adjusted to suit varying abilities?

The issue of educational efficiency is one that Americans tend to avoid. Commenting on the Department of Education's report on Japanese Education Today (January 1987) the New York Times reporter Fred M. Hechinger remarked complacently that in Japan, young people's access to higher education was, and remains, severely limited, as contrasted with the United States. Yet the mere fact that a larger proportion of young Americans go to college is an ambiguous argument. If the secondary stage of education is inefficient, if it leaves a large proportion of young persons inadequately trained, then no doubt society, if it can afford the cost, will have to provide post-secondary remedial education. And that is what a considerable amount of "higher education" is doing today. According to an official of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges 4.8 million students enrolled in community, technical, and junior colleges in the fall of 1986. (Letter to the Editor, New York Times, February 12, 1987.) How many of those 4.8 million were hoping to find a remedy for their inadequate high school education?

A cool critical discussion of the assumption that making college education available to more and more persons is desirable will be found in Thomas Sowell's essay on "The 'Need' for More College 'Education.'" Sowell remarks that the general assumption that everyone should have the opportunity of higher education is in reality bizarre.

The idea of college-for-every-youngster ignores the simple fact that college is not the only place where the mind can

develop, nor late adolescence the only time. But too often the empty formalism of tediously amassing credits for a degree is also the slow death of any intellectual interest.

(Thomas Sowell, Education: Assumptions versus History.

Collected Papers, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986, p. 115.)

To return to our central theme: homogeneous classes, pursuing parallel but suitably challenging core curricula, with a reasonable number of elective shorter courses designed to stimulate varied interests and aptitudes or cultivate particular skills (not to change characters and convictions) -- this should be the basic pattern in public schools, as it is in most private schools. In social studies, the emphasis should be on a few traditional bodies of knowledge: history, (national and world) geography (sadly neglected at present), and American Government (including recent and current policy, both domestic and foreign). An alert teacher can introduce references to topics of current interest in the appropriate core course.

This core curriculum provides a firm framework of basic knowledge. It gives both teacher and student a disciplined and systematic process. It provides basic information, vocabulary, and analytic skills on which lifelong habits of observation, participation, decision-making, and problem-solving may be founded. It removes the teacher's temptation to preach, to engage in emotional propaganda, and to encourage immature political activism on the part of students.

Once again the underlying crucial issue in this controversy forces itself on our attention: the issue between the theory that schools are responsible for reforming society and the traditional theory that education should prepare the rising generation for serving existing society. Influential circles in public education are committed to the reforming vision, and have adopted the short, narrowly focused course as one useful vehicle for changing children's outlook and providing the human components of future political activism. This is especially the case in the social studies curriculum.

As I write this paper I have a recent issue of Social Education before me. It is devoted to Apartheid, and clearly provides material for several weeks' intensive exposure of students to the ugly segregation in South Africa. The tone is self-righteous. Clearly this is intended to induce emotional response, not a rational understanding of a dangerous and difficult social predicament, complicated by strategic geopolitical factors, and economic considerations.

The editors are sure that their own hearts are warmly righteous; in this firm conviction they intend to convey indignation to captive audiences in classrooms. Indignation is an intoxicating emotion, and young people are easily swept by it into mob-action and behavior unconcerned with consequences.

As I read this issue of Social Education, I look in vain for

concern for the stability of the only economically successful country in Africa south of the Sahara. There is no reference to tribal hostilities, to the killing and torture of blacks by blacks, to the African National Congress' Marxism, to its endorsement of terrorism, to its proposed expropriation of white Africans. The moderate Zulu leader Buthelezi is unmentioned. The fact that South Africa attracts more than one million immigrant workers from its black-ruled neighbors is ignored.

There is no comparative mention of Third World Governments in Africa and elsewhere. Black tyranny and mass-extinction in Ethiopia, Uganda, and the Central African Republic; Cuban mercenaries in Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique; civil war in Zaire and Nigeria; dictators in Ghana and Liberia; racist expulsion of Asians from Kenya; one-party dictatorships throughout Black Africa; not to mention the situation in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Cuba and Central America, and the Soviet Union; -- all these facts, which have a bearing on American judgments about South Africa, are unnoted in the unbalanced treatment of Apartheid in Social Education, February, 1987.

I could go on with instances of unbalanced and irresponsible analysis, but this paper is not primarily concerned with South Africa. My point is that the short topical fashionable course inescapably becomes propagandistic. No doubt many who advocate short courses intend them as propaganda; they evidently do not consider this to be a betrayal of professional responsibility. Perhaps our country's record of genocide, slavery, and racial

discrimination, not to mention the prevalence of crime, drug addiction, unemployment, and teenage pregnancy, in our black ghettos, encourages the transfer of guilt-feelings on the part of American intellectuals. Whatever the cause or diagnosis, the effects on education are unfortunate. And one of the effects is the proliferation of short courses each of which has some not-so-hidden agenda, some political ax to grind.

To sum up: as I see it, the appeal of short courses to many persons lies in the apparent ease with which a short course, focusing on a controversial issue, can be used for transforming our society. To read historical commentaries on public education and education policies since the 1940s is to realize the persistence among educationists of the progressive syndrome -- which I am tempted to call professional anti-intellectualism. No matter how often their experiments fail, the pedagogic experts resume their attempts to dispense with traditional wisdom.

In 1973-77, international surveys showed American students in the lowest third in reading, lowest of all advanced nations in mathematics, and lowest (along with Ireland) in civic education. (Ernest L. Boyer, High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America. New York: Harper and Row, 1983, p. 33.)

In 1976, 47 percent of the seniors did not know the number of senators per state. In 1979, almost 10 percent of the seniors could not find the United States on a world map.

(Robert Hampel. The Last Little Citadel: American High

Schools Since 1940. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986. pp. 140-41.)

Commenting on the attempt to combine "equality" and "quality" in secondary education Hampel remarked with characteristic ambiguity:

No one suggested that higher hurdles [improved quality] might slow rather than speed the disadvantaged. Almost no one discussed the fate of students unable to meet harder graduation requirements . . . (Ibid., pp. 144-45.)

In a similar ambiguous vein Hampel wrote:

There are bound to be howls of protest from all the factions slighted by the 1980s' emphasis on academic excellence.... Orderly schools with tight discipline matter more to many people than orderly thinking, and therefore change . . . will probably continue to be slow and uneven. (Ibid., p. 154.)

This type of elusive comment is typical of the defensive arguments of many professional educators, who seem incapable of perceiving that certain aims are logically incompatible, and that the relation between aim and target in human development may not be a straight line. (See also a complacent article, "The Mythical Nature of Public Debate About Education," by Willis D. Hawley in Phi Delta Kappan, November, 1985.)

Boyer also makes a plausible but to me unconvincing defense of American secondary education.

Americans have been less awed than many other countries by "high culture." We have been more reluctant to define what it means to be an educated person. . . .

Further, Americans tend to see schooling as the way for each individual to achieve success and as a way to achieve social equity, too. . . . Taken together [these beliefs] make our education system sharply distinguishable from those of most other countries, and they make international comparisons somewhat risky. (Boyer, op. cit., p. 36.)

"Everyone is out of step but our Johnnie!"

I should add that a first glance suggests that Boyer comes out on the side of core curriculum, with United States History, Western Civilization, Non-Western Civilization, and Civics as the core of social studies. (Ibid., pp. 303-304.) However, it is not clear whether these are real core courses or merely a facade for ax-grinding short courses on the Empire of Mansa Musa, plantation slavery, civil disobedience, the moral equivalence of Western Democracy and Soviet totalitarianism, and similar units of "in-depth instruction," designed to be "confrontational" and "highly selective."

Let me at this point put in a plea for more substantive

information in our social studies. Surely our high school graduates deserve to know enough to be able to read Time magazine, to recognize references to the Mexican War, or "the Good Neighbor Policy," or "Lend-lease," to know the location of Nicaragua or Afghanistan, and to identify approximately the dates of presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt or Andrew Jackson.

Recently I had the good fortune to be helped by a high school senior in compiling some educational materials on international politics. I asked my enthusiastic helper to write up some definitions for me, which he did without benefit of reference materials (although these were available). Here are some of his contributions:

MONROE DOCTRINE: U.S. would help any nation with economic aid or military support.

NATO (NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION): Mutual defense agreement between England, U.S., Turkey, and Greece.

ROOSEVELT COROLLARY TO THE MONROE DOCTRINE: Good Neighbor Policy.

GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY: A program of the U.S. to help countries who are in need of some assistance.

Let me emphasize that this was not a test of knowledge, but part of a routine assignment of compiling a glossary of terms. I

assumed that a bright, politically alert senior would have acquired basic information on such matters in the course of learning United States history. I can only assume that his instructor was too interested in some "confrontational" and "highly selective" topics to bother about these humdrum details. No matter what the good intention of the teacher, students, who leave high school without knowing what the Monroe Doctrine was, have been short-changed.

I have made my point. The question of short courses turns on one's philosophy of education which in turn depends on one's ideological or political attitudinal predilections. In conclusion, however, let me recommend to your attention a booklet on effective methods in education that the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement compiled and published in 1986. It is entitled What Works, and, mirabile dictu, it demonstrates by recent research that conventional common sense about education is efficient and practical.

Relevant to my theme are the following examples of what works, culled from What Works:

Teachers who set and communicate high expectations to all their students obtain greater academic performance from those students than teachers who set low expectations.

Student achievement rises significantly when teachers regularly assign homework and students conscientiously do it.

Schools that encourage academic achievement focus on the importance of scholastic success and on maintaining order and discipline.

Students read more fluently and with greater understanding if they have background knowledge of past and present. Such knowledge and understanding is called cultural literacy.

Skimpy requirements and declining enrollments in history classes are contributing to a decline in students' knowledge of the past.

The stronger the emphasis on academic courses, the more advanced the subject matter, and the more rigorous the textbooks, the more high school students learn.

Business leaders report that students with solid basic skills and positive work attitudes are more likely to find and keep jobs than students with vocational skills alone.

(The above are from What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, William J. Bennett, Secretary. 1986. pp. 32, 41, 46, 53, 55, 59, 62.)

There you have it. Everything about effective education that you knew in your inner mind, but were afraid to mention! However,

if you are convinced that the aims of conventional, common sensible education were and are wrong, these truths or truisms are irrelevant, since there's no point in doing efficiently something that is undesirable.